

The Builder.

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PUBLIC notice has been given that the principal ironmongers of London, being anxious to contribute to the comfort and welfare of those in their employ, purpose closing their establishments henceforth at seven o'clock in the evening; and our co-operation in carrying out this object has been solicited.

Most readily we give it: most readily and most earnestly we appeal to our readers in favour of the intention, and we entreat them to aid in giving effect to a change so important—so imperatively demanded. It is a measure of amelioration, not simply to be advocated as desirable, but to be called for as a duty owing to society. We have so often urged the importance of steady application to business, and shewn the pleasure as well as advantage to be derived from the efficient discharge of duties in that respect,—the gratification which the good workman, or the intelligent and assiduous trader, may find in the exercise of his calling,—that we are not likely to be misunderstood, when we say that devotion to trade is not to be regarded as the chief aim of life,—that the cares of business ought not to absorb all our time and thoughts, and that to condemn those beneath us to ceaseless drudgery, is but ill following out a great command. To make a pains-taking, honest, and able ironmonger, is something, but to develop an intelligent, reasoning, enjoying man, is more, much more; and for this we would have time afforded wherever it is possible. We would not have men work to work, if we may use the expression, but work to understand, to enjoy, to praise, and to be happy: and this applies as well to masters as to men. Labour is the necessary condition of our well-being,—the condition not merely of our material comfort and prosperity, but of our intellectual and moral elevation. To advance and improve we must labour, as we must to support and accumulate: and what we earnestly desire is, that time may be afforded for both sorts of labour,—that the labour to live and accumulate may not be regarded as all-important, and that the opportunity to labour for development be afforded.

The time for this becomes necessarily less in each class as we descend in society: the tendency of machinery and social progress, happily, is to increase this, and all who desire the general advancement and the well being of society, should aid in extending the advantages of mental cultivation, the first step towards which is to give time for improvement.

A large number of the assistants and operatives in trading establishments are in a miserably low state in an intellectual and moral point of view,—the intelligent exceptions, of which there are many, will confirm this statement,—and under existing circumstances, improvement is almost out of the question. The contemplated change in the hours of business would give them a little more time for improvement and recreation (which, when innocent and healthful, is itself improvement), and would not fail to have a considerable effect advancing

tageously on the present generation, and a much greater on the generation to come. We sincerely hope that the proposed arrangement will be widely adopted on the part of the masters, and wisely availed of on the part of the men.

Man is not to be treated as a mere machine. He has within him powers, affections, and means of enjoyment, through the beneficence of his Creator, which only need development; and although all cannot hope, under the circumstances in which they are placed, to have the same opportunities as others, the general endeavour should be to assist in getting for all, so far as may be, the means for their cultivation:—

"Sure, be that made us with such large discourse
Looking before and after, gave us not
That capability and God-like reason
To rust in us unused."

To give time for the mind to commune with itself, to enjoy a healthful ramble in the green fields, or to gaze upon the representations of great men and noble actions on the speaking canvas, is no unimportant boon, even should no other advantage be taken of the change.

How many great things have been produced in what the careless spectator would call idleness! Amidst the constant bustle for bread, the mind has scarcely fair play. In solitude, quiet, and *laziness*, some of the noblest ideas (ideas which have served as sparks of light to illumine a thousand souls), have been eliminated, and some of the most useful inventions shadowed out. A ramble through the forests may lead to more than might a month's study:—

"One impulse from a vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

And the fields may show to the properly observant mind,—

"How skill and beauty dwell
In the smallest floral cell."

Not that this remark is intended to justify a habit in life of waiting for such inspiration,—a departure from the region of reality and execution to that of reverie and maze—and touching which we met with a passage in a new novel the other day, which it may not be useless to quote.* The writer inquires who there is who, having indulged in the enchantment of the world of reverie, and found his thoughts take shape without an effort, passing from the creative mind into the creative act, without the hard obstacle of a medium, has not felt humbled and discouraged when he has become aware of the immensity of labour, of hard resolute labour to be undergone before he can incarnate his ideas into works? "The unwritten poems,"—he remarks,—“the unpainted pictures—the unnoted melodies are, it is often said, transcendently superior to those poems, pictures, and melodies which artists succeed in producing. Perhaps so; but the world justly takes no account of unaccomplished promises, of unfought victories. What it applauds is the actual victory won in earnest struggle with difficulty; the heroes it crowns are those who have enriched them with trophies, not those who *might* have done so. Would Michaelangelo have built St. Peter's, sculptured the Moses, and made the walls of the Vatican sacred with the presence of his gigantic pencil, had he awaited inspiration while his works were in progress? Would Rubens have dazzled all the galleries of Europe, had he allowed his brush to hesitate? Would Beethoven and Mozart have poured out their souls into such abundant melodies? Would Goethe have

written the sixty volumes of his works—had they not often, very often, sat down like drudges to an unwilling task, and found themselves speedily engrossed with that to which they were so averse?" "Use the pen," says a thoughtful and subtle author, "there is no magic in it; but it keeps the mind from staggering about." This is an aphorism which should be printed in letters of gold over the studio door of every artist. "Use the pen or the pencil; do not pause, do not trifle, have no misgivings; but keep your mind from staggering about by fixing it resolutely on the matter before you, and then all that you can do you will do; inspiration will not enable you to do more. Write or draw; act, do not hesitate. If what you have written or painted should turn out imperfect, you can correct it, and the correction will be more efficient than that correction which takes place in the shifting thoughts of hesitation." The magic of the pen lies in the concentration of your thoughts upon one object. Let your pen fall, begin to trifle with blotting-paper, look at the ceiling, bite your nails, and otherwise dally with your purpose, and you waste your time, scatter your thoughts, and repress the nervous energy necessary for your task. To pursue this further, however, would lead us from our present purpose, which is to induce co-operation with those masters who, "anxious to contribute to the comfort and welfare of the persons in their employ," propose henceforth to close their establishments early in the evening.

ON ARCHITECTURAL EXHIBITIONS.

IS continuation of former remarks on this subject,* we have now to consider—what is the present condition of our national exhibition of architectural designs, and the cause and consequence of that position? The first point requires but very brief notice; but let it be fully borne in mind that this results from the notoriety of the facts connected with it, and consequently furnishes a convincing proof of the necessity for some attention being paid to them.

A hanging committee is by rotation annually appointed from among the members of the Royal Academy, this committee being year after year (as a matter of course, from their superiority in numbers) composed almost exclusively of painters. Such architectural drawings as they select from the number sent, are deposited, with a multitude of subjects in oil, in a small room, which is naturally visited by the public after the great galleries have been examined, and consequently when the eye and mind, being filled with beauty of form developed with all that richness and depth of colour of which oil is capable, are both entirely unfitted for the proper appreciation of harmony of outline, grandeur of proportion, or delicacy of light and shade embodied in small slight drawings, intended to be viewed as indices to these and similar ideas only, and not as specimens of rich and forcible colour, which latter, though liberally enough supplied by nature to architecture, should not in honour be brought prominently into notice by any architect in a representation of his design, because he has no real control over it. Add to this, that many of the subjects are placed in positions so high or low that it is impossible to arrive at any correct idea of their merits, and we have a true representation of the only architectural exhibition room at the Academy, or any where else in England.

The cause of this want of success may perhaps in a measure arise from the small number of architects compared with painters in the Academy, but yet the want of a proper spirit on the subject seems very evident even in this minority, a strong proof of which is that no one of its constituents considers himself called upon or chooses to give the public any idea of the subjects to which his

* "Rose, Blanche, and Violet."—By G. H. Lewes.

* See p. 245, ante.